

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.: 2003P01777WOUS

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows, this listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 - 10 (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A dishwasher comprising:
at least one washing container for receiving items to be ~~eleaned~~ handled, with the
items to be handled being subjected to an operative handling cycle including at
least one of a washing step, a rinsing step and a drying step wherein the washing
step includes introduction of a cleaning agent and a fluid carrier forming a
washing fluid and the rinsing step includes introduction of a rinsing fluid; and
a system for recognition of the fluid level of the washing fluid contained in the
dishwasher, the fluid level recognition system having at least one capacitive
filling level sensor ~~whose electrical capacitance changes as a function of the~~
~~height of the fluid level~~ having at least two probes, forming two capacitor plates,
each operatively coupled to a sensor surface and projecting into the washing
container for operative contact with the washing fluid, thereby using the washing
fluid as a dielectric having a dielectric constant that changes with the fill level of
the washing fluid, wherein at a first fill level the probes and the washing fluid
form a capacitor having a first capacitance value indicating a first fill level and
causing the filling level sensor to sense the first fill level and at a second fill level
the probes and the washing fluid form a capacitor having a second capacitance
value indicating a second fill level and causing the filling level sensor to sense the
second fill level.
12. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 11, wherein the filling
level sensor is in the form of a capacitor whose electrical capacitance varies

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depending on the dielectric constant of the medium surrounding the filling level sensor.

13. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 11, wherein the filling level sensor reacts to the relative dielectric constant of water.
14. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 11, wherein the filling level sensor includes at least two opposite active sensor surfaces at which an electromagnetic field can be formed that varies as a function of the dielectric constant of the medium surrounding the sensor surfaces.
15. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 11, wherein the filling level sensor is located outside the washing container, the filling level sensor has a selected one of at least one sensor surface and no sensor surfaces, and the filling level sensor and its respective sensor surfaces are isolated from the rinsing liquid by a selected one of a wall of the washing container and a structure other than a wall of the washing container.
16. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 11, wherein at least one sensor probe made of electrically conducting material is provided inside the washing container and an electromagnetic field can be formed between the sensor probe and the filling level sensor, wherein the electromagnetic field varies depending on the height of the liquid level or varies depending on the dielectric constant of the medium surrounding the sensor probe.
17. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 16, wherein the at least one sensor probe is arranged so that it is separated with respect to an active sensor surface of the filling level sensor by a selected one of a wall of the washing container and a structure other than a wall of the washing container.

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18. (Currently Amended) The dishwasher according to claim 16, wherein the electrical capacitance of the filling level sensor and its variation is detected using electrical means by at least one of a detection in a qualitative manner and a detection in a ~~qualitative~~ quantitative manner.
19. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 11 and further comprising electronic storage means in which at least one reference value can be stored which corresponds to an electrical capacitance of the filling level sensor at a specific fluid level.
20. (Previously Presented) The dishwasher according to claim 11, wherein a certain limiting value of the electrical capacitance of the filling level sensor is specified to discriminate between whether the filling level sensor is located in the proximity of a medium having a high or low dielectric constant or whether the filling level sensor is surrounded by an aqueous fluid or by air.